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# ENG3705-600: American Multicultural Literatures

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## Multiculturalism's Greatest Hits (and Misses) English 3705–Summer, 2016

Instructor: Tim Engles

Office hours: Via email, and by appointment and request in the Online Rooms

### **Books from Textbook Rental (not all of these will be required readings):**

Richard Wright, *Savage Holiday* (1954)  
Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior* (1976)  
August Wilson, *Fences* (1983)  
Sandra Cisneros, *The House on Mango Street* (1984)  
Art Spiegelman, *Maus*, Volumes 1 & 2 (1986, 1991)  
David Henry Hwang, *M. Butterfly* (1988)  
Amy Tan, *The Joy Luck Club* (1989)  
Helena María Viramontes, *Under the Feet of Jesus* (1995)  
Walter Dean Myers, *Monster* (1999)  
Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home* (2006)

### **COURSE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

**(these words constitute our contract; much of the following may seem familiar or tempting to skim over, but you really need to read it all carefully)**

Catalog description: (3-0-3) Emphasis on race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality in literatures from 1700 to the present, featuring African-American, Asian-American, Native-American, Latino/a writers and immigrant American Writers. Prerequisite: ENG 1002G.

Instructor's description: Since the advent of "multicultural literature" as a genre in the 1990s, many minority-authored texts have emerged as widespread favorites among scholars and educators. We will juxtapose popular, widely heralded multicultural works with other worthy, but less familiar ones. Guiding questions will include: Who are the gate-keeping readers and literature teachers in our culture? What have they been seeking in terms of "multicultural literature," and what have they missed? Why have some multicultural literary works attained canonical status, while others that also deserve recognition have been largely overlooked? How can scholars, teachers and other observers of multicultural literature, literary canon formation, psychology, and relevant sociohistorical issues help us sort through these matters?

We will conduct our course as an inquiring conversation on these matters, with your active participation central to our work. Because success in online courses requires especially active student engagement, it is crucial that you keep up with the reading and related assignments, and that you do so with careful attention. Note that while you can to some extent work at your own pace in this course, there are strict deadlines for various assignments. You also will not be able to work all that far ahead—course material will be rolled out during our six-week semester on a week-by-week basis, which means that in any given week, you will have to wait to do activities

and assignments coming up in the following weeks.

**Learning Objectives:** The following objectives apply to all six weekly modules. Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Better read literary works that express a wide range of cultural perspectives and values, and think more critically and write more analytically about them.
2. Demonstrate an increased understanding and appreciation for social, cultural, intellectual, and aesthetic ideas and controversies.
3. Understand why certain multicultural literary works are widely read and taught, why others are not, and why and how others could be read and taught instead (or as well).
4. Critique important course concepts (such as multiculturalism and multicultural literature, and the impacts of race, ethnicity, and social class on the reception of literature) through reading, viewing, discussion and extended writing assignments.
5. Better apprehend academic scholarship and better utilize concepts and terminology drawn from it.
6. Produce effective written critique of multicultural literature and the issues it raises.
7. Use improved research skills to find useful secondary materials, and properly apply the principles of documentation.
8. Apply concepts and terminology from other fields of research to the study of literature, and vice versa.

**Technical requirements:** Students must have regular access to the Internet using a laptop or desktop computer. Students must know how to download and upload email attachments, access Youtube, install software, and use a webcam and microphone. You must have access to Adobe Reader (free download) or Preview (for Macs).

**A note about reading:** Since one skill you will be developing in this class is the art of textual analysis, you must give the readings and viewings more than a quick skimming over. Instead of wolfing them down and rushing to complete them, set aside enough time to read and view carefully. As you read, consider taking notes and then deciding for yourself what each author is trying to describe and bring to light.

Also, to ensure that your final grade reflects your reading effort, we will have weekly quizzes on required readings and other course materials. Quizzes will also appear at the end of some of our online presentations. Quizzes in this course will have a required completion date and they cannot be made up. As noted below, we will have one exam, a final “take-home” essay exam.

**Academic integrity:** Remember also that this course follows the Academic Integrity policy followed by all Eastern Illinois University students. Plagiarism and cheating is not tolerated, and the consequences are severe. For any concerns you might have in this area, see EIU’s [Code of Conduct](#). If you have specific questions about whether any particular method you want to use might violate this code, be sure to ask Dr. Engles about it, either by email or during his online office hours.

**Cheating** in this course includes, but is not limited to:

- Sharing information during a quiz or the final exam
- Doing homework or taking a test or quiz in place of another student, OR asking someone else to take a test, quiz or do homework for you
- Submitting the same paper for multiple classes without permission
- Taking credit for work that is not your own
- Not citing a source where submitted material was found or used
- Lying to protect yourself or another student who has cheated

**Grades, assignments, and significant deadlines:** Unless otherwise indicated, I will grade assignments within three days of their due date. All assignments in this course will be graded on a 100-point scale (90-100 = A, etc.), and your final course grade will be determined in the following way:

Written Discussion Forum Postings	10%
Average of Five Weekly Response Papers (2-3 pages each)	20%
Average of Weekly Quizzes	15%
Final Project (6-8 page Paper and Online Presentation)	20%
Final Exam (6-8 pages)	20%
Participation (including Presentation Quizzes)	15%

Course materials will be released weekly, and to a limited extent, students can work at their own pace. Given the possibility at any point that software and internet connections may be down or working slowly, and because (as explained more fully below), late assignments are not accepted in this course, I strongly recommend against waiting to complete assignments until just before their deadline.

Unless otherwise noted, the deadline for each assignment will be 11:59 p.m. of the listed day.

**Regular and significant deadlines** include the following:

Five weekly response papers: Thursdays at 11:59 p.m.  
Five weekly quizzes: Fridays at 11:59 p.m. (the quiz will be available all day long)  
Final project: Wednesday, July 20 at 11:59 p.m.  
Final exam: Friday, July 22 at 11:59 p.m.

**General grading rubric:** Aside from the more specific grading rubric for formal essays that you will receive near the end of the semester regarding your Final Essay, your assignments in this course will be graded in the following terms:

**A grade of A** indicates work that is truly outstanding in every way. In addition to completely and promptly following the guidelines for the assignment, work that receives an A grade provides a depth of analysis that adds substantive insight to the conversation surrounding the literary text and/or related issues. This level of work engages deeply with the themes, issues and ideas involved in a particular text and often links those themes, issues and ideas to the larger ones reflected in our overall course. In this way, such work

helps all who read it understand the literary text and/or related issues better and more deeply. A-level work is rare, and it should be noted that merely writing MORE than what was assigned does not necessarily merit a grade of A.

**A grade of B** indicates that, in addition to completing the assignment on time and completely, you have provided a depth of insight and analysis that shows that you have thought deeply about the assignment and its implications, that you have engaged actively with the reading or viewing, have thought carefully about it, and that this thought is reflected in clear, cogent and insightful writing. Such work engages with deeper meanings of the text, perhaps by connecting it to others and with some overall themes of our course. In other words, B-level work does more than simply complete the assignment; it engages deeply with the assignment. Again, it should be noted that merely writing MORE than what was assigned does not necessarily merit a grade of B.

**A grade of C** indicates that you have completed the assignment as required in an adequate, satisfactory and punctual manner. All necessary components of the assignment are present and completed according to what was required. The writing is clear and grammatically correct. In other words, merely doing the assignment adequately and on time will earn you a grade of C.

**A grade of D** indicates that the work does not meet the requirements of the assignment in some major respect(s). Although parts of the assignment may be satisfactory, an assignment that merits a D is incomplete or does not otherwise adequately address the requirements of the assignment. In other words, work might be given a D if it does not engage adequately with the question or the literary text in question. Note that a grade of D may be given to work that partially completes the assignment, but is incomplete.

**A grade of F** indicates that the assignment is either extremely incomplete or that it does nothing to engage with the question asked or with the literary text being discussed.

**Regarding formal written Assignments:** The five Response Papers and the essay portion of the Final Project must be submitted in Word format, according to MLA guidelines and standards when applicable. One exception is that the Response Papers DO NOT require a Works Cited page. If you are unfamiliar with MLA guidelines, you should consult [Purdue's Online Writing Lab](#). There is a new edition of the MLA Handbook, but since its new rules are so recent, you can follow the older MLA rules listed at Purdue's site if you like.

**Regarding assignment due dates and missed assignments:** Deadlines for assignments and discussions will be clearly labeled in each weekly module. Note that with the exception of the first module, labeled Introduction, the six other modules will be labeled weekly (Week One, Week Two, etc.). Each week's module will appear on the previous Friday evening. Every assignment will contain both a time and day of the week for its deadline; the day of the week listed (Wednesday, Thursday, etc.) will be during that module's current week.

With the exception of deadlines missed due to documented emergencies, **no late assignments will be accepted**. Assignments may only be turned in late if the student provides documentation

of an emergency. Proper documentation must be an official, original scanned document containing the student's name; it must cover the date(s) in question and be signed by a professional (e.g., a doctor). An email is not proper documentation.

**Classroom environment:** As described in the Introduction module, all students will indicate their availability for an Online Rooms Discussion on Thursdays. We will conduct a weekly, hour-long synchronous meeting together each Thursday. I expect all of you to participate in these discussions and on our Discussion Boards, and class participation will be figured into your final grade. The best way to demonstrate that you are an active, engaged, and interested class participant is by reading all of the course material carefully, by contributing regularly to these discussions, and by paying close attention to what everyone else has to say. You will all gain more if everyone contributes together to a positive, challenging, interesting learning environment.

Also, be aware that sensitive issues sometimes arise within a course on multicultural material, so we must respect the opinions of others—try to respond to ideas, rather than to the person stating them.

Your participation grade will be based on several factors, including the above General Grading Rubric and the following general policies for **Netiquette**:

- Do not dominate discussions. Give other students the opportunity to join in.
- Do not use offensive language. Present your ideas appropriately. The only time when certain offensive words are appropriate is when you are quoting the use of them by someone else (such as a fictional character).
- Be cautious with internet language. For example, do not capitalize all letters, which suggests shouting.
- Popular emoticons and abbreviations can be helpful to convey your tone, but do not overdo or overuse them.
- Don't worry much about proper, full sentences and other conventions of more formal writing. On the other hand, avoid using vernacular and/or slang language, which could lead to misinterpretation.
- Never make fun of someone else's ability to read or write. There's also no reason to make fun of or apologize for your own. Similarly, avoid sarcasm, which can easily come across
- Please share any tips you might have with other students. Along the same lines, don't hesitate to ask at any point for clarification; others may well have the same question.
- Keep an "open-mind" and be willing to express even your unusual opinions. Opinions that differ from those of the majority must be respected.
- Using humor is acceptable but be aware that some humor can be easily misinterpreted online. For example, are you being humorous, or sarcastic? Sarcasm has its place, but it can be especially difficult to convey in writing, which lacks such additional cues as facial expression and body language.

**Academic Support:** Students who need tutoring or academic support should contact the Student Success Center at 217-581-6696 for help with course assignments, tutoring, and other academic

issues. The English Department's Writing Center can also help students improve their performance in this course. For more information visit [their website](#). To schedule an appointment, call 217-581-5929, or if you're on campus, stop by Coleman Hall, Room 3110 during their open hours.

**Technical Support:** In order to succeed in this online course, students should have technological skills that include (but are not limited to): navigating an online course management system (in this case, Desire2Learn), composing emails, accessing online files and web links, and submitting properly formatted assignments as attachments or via the D2L Dropbox.

For technical support with D2L, you can contact the ITS Help Desk at 217-581-4357 or [itshelp@eiu.edu](mailto:itshelp@eiu.edu) or CATS Training Services for Students at 217-581-8358.

**Help with course content and procedures:** As explained in the Introduction Module, our course has a "Need Help?" Discussion Forum where students can ask questions about the course that I (Dr. Engles) can likely answer. Asking a question there about course content and procedures is a good idea, because others (who may well have the same question) will be able to see my answers. If you have questions that you want to ask me individually, email is of course okay, either in D2L or to [tdengles@eiu.edu](mailto:tdengles@eiu.edu). Unless otherwise indicated, I will respond to the Discussion Forum questions and any student email within twenty-four hours.

**Information for Students with Disabilities:** If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the [Office of Student Disability Services](#) (581-6583) as soon as possible.